

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 and 20 are pending herein. Claims 7-19 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 1 has been amended as supported by, for example, Fig. 1(b) of the present application. Claim 3 has been amended for clarification purposes only.

1. Applicants affirm the provisional election to prosecute claims 1-6 and 20. Claims 7-19 have been withdrawn from consideration as being drawn to a non-elected invention, and thus have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants reserve the right under 35 USC 121 to file a divisional application for the non-elected claims.
2. The rejection of claims 1-6 and 20 under §112, second paragraph is noted, but deemed moot in view of the rewritten claims submitted above.
3. Claims 1-6 and 20 were rejected under §102(b) over Shahid. To the extent that this rejection might be applied against the amended claims, it is respectfully traversed.

With reference to Fig. 1(b) of the present application, pending independent claim 1 recites that at least some of a plurality of polarization-maintaining fibers 12 are surrounded by a ribbon portion 2, which has first and second lateral ends and a length of 2 to 300 mm. The polarization-maintaining fibers 12 extend individually from the second lateral end of ribbon portion 2. The applied prior art of record, discussed below, does not disclose or suggest the ribbon portion structure recited in pending claim 1.

Fig. 2 of Shahid shows that the ribbon portion of optical fiber cable 30 extends over substantially the entire length of the optical fibers 10 that extend from the rear portion of plug 22. That is, Shahid's ribbon cable is unwound from a drum and a portion of the cable is stripped away to expose a relatively short length of individual fibers positioned near the front portion of plug 22 (see Col. 6, lines 3-12 of Shahid). As such, Shahid discloses only that a front portion of the optical fiber cable is removed, and does not disclose or suggest "a ribbon portion have a length of 2 to 300 mm," as recited in pending claim 1. As Fig. 2 clearly shows, the ribbon portion of Shahid's cable is indeterminate in length.

Moreover, because Shahid's optical fiber cable 30 extends over substantially the entire rear length of the optical fibers 10, the optical fibers do not extend individually from any part

of the rear portion of the optical fiber cable, and do not extend individually from the rear of plug 22. As explained above, pending claim 1 now recites that the polarization-maintaining fibers extend individually from the second lateral end of the ribbon portion. Unlike the structure recited in pending claim 1, Shahid's pre-existing jacket portion (i.e., optical fiber cable 30), which, again, runs substantially the entire length of the optical fibers extending from the rear of plug 22, impedes the ability to rotate the optical fibers, and thus accurately align the individual fibers.

In view of all of the foregoing, reconsideration and withdrawal of the §102(b) rejection over Shahid are respectfully requested.

The Examiner is requested to confirm receipt and consideration of the IDS filed March 11, 2002.

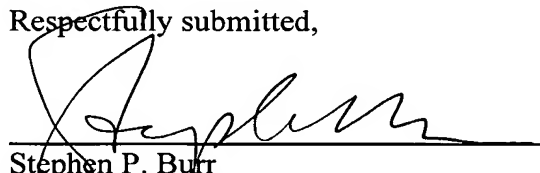
If the Examiner believes that contact with Applicants' attorney would be advantageous toward the disposition of this case, the Examiner is herein requested to call Applicants' attorney at the phone number noted below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date


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